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THE ROUND TABLE

ANOTHER WORD ABOUT FRESHMAN ENGLISH

President Charles F. Thwing, a short time ago, in introducing one of his instructors to another man, said, "Mr. X [the instructor] believes that a Freshman has a soul." Perhaps there may be a suggestion in his words, "A Freshman has a soul."

Joe was listless and apparently far away. His themes were impossible. Every means I had used to bring him out failed, and I was about ready to report him deficient. In conference one day it all came out. He is a native of Germany. The only relatives he has in this country are his father and mother, while his uncles and cousins are at the front in Europe. He has been trained from earliest childhood to despise anything English, and so, naturally, he rebels against a course of study which bears the name English. His whole purpose in life is to get back to Germany to fight in the trenches, but the consul gives him no encouragement, insisting that he will be taken by the English and sent back to America. When I told him that I wanted him to express his thoughts freely in his themes he seemed a little suspicious at first, but later took pride in his compositions, with the result that he now has no trouble with his English. All of which goes to prove that the Duke of Wellington's theory of style was true after all: "Have something to say, and say it."

Ed had sailed to the Orient twice, in addition to having made a trip to Alaska. His themes at first gave great promise, but later reached a dead level from which it was impossible to move them. Upon my asking him why he did not use a little more freedom, he replied that he supposed he would not be allowed to quote the language used by the sailors.

John's interest, I found, lay in the French River region of Ontario. When he discovered that I, too, was greatly impressed by the beauty of Killarney, his themes were much more interesting than they had formerly been, and his diction improved 100 per cent.

Sol was one of the greatest puzzles I have had. His face was that of a mature man, with deep furrows, and eyes that had the expression of a man of sorrows. His writing, however, was stilted, and it was impossible to get any freedom of expression whatever. At last, one day in conference, he told me his story. He had lived in Russia until

he was seven years old, and then the family had escaped to America. They came directly to the middle-western city of A——, where they lived on the fourth floor of a tenement, amid all the squalor of the slums. Sol sold papers, and was kicked about by everybody, and when he came home at night he climbed those three flights of stairs, over men dead drunk and past women cursing at him. He had learned a vocabulary that was marvelous, but one that could scarcely be used in writing polite English. After a few years the family moved to C——. Here Sol completed his high-school course, and he has entered college upon a scholarship. His father is dead, and Sol is supporting his mother and three younger children and keeping himself in college by lighting street lamps for nine dollars a week. Once or twice a week he earns two or three dollars extra by sweeping out a moving-picture theater. After completing his college course he expects to study medicine. Not one word of this had come out in any of his papers. But after the conference he made freer use of his life in Russia for theme subjects than he had done before, and his English has improved at the same time.

All this might sound like a series of patent-medicine testimonials. "A Freshman has a soul." Perhaps here is, after all, the solution for the majority of our difficulties. We have laid the blame at the feet of the college, charging the curriculum. We have tried to prove that we, as instructors, have been given too much to do. We have blamed the student for not taking more interest in his class work and less in his outside activities. I wonder if we have not dodged the point in all this, attempting to shift responsibility? "A Freshman has a soul."

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A NOTE ON "MACBETH"

At the English King's Palace

Enter [to Malcolm and Macduff] Ross

Macd. See, who comes here?

Mal. My countryman; but yet I know him not.

Macd. My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

Mal. I know him now, Good God, betimes remove
The means that makes us strangers.

—*Macbeth*, IV, iii, 159-63.

Practically all editors of *Macbeth* feel that the passage quoted above needs interpretation. But the meanings read into the words are con-